

ALL
ABOUT
ME

Poems for a Child
by

JOHN DRINKWATER

Decorated with Illustrations by
H. M. BROCK

ALL ABOUT ME

John Drinkwater

WHEN the author of *Abraham Lincoln*, *Oliver Cromwell* and *Robert E. Lee*, produced his first comedy, *Bird in Hand*, many of his most friendly critics expressed surprise that the serious chronicler should turn humorist. In the same way, readers may not have expected these 'light easy rhymes' of childhood from the poet of *Olton Pools* and *Preludes*. But Mr. Drinkwater has always held that a writer should take any experience that comes in this way and use it to the best purpose that he can, in any medium that seems to him most suitable. These verses show no sympathy with the high-falutin' fancies that are imposed upon the nursery by elders. They tell of the intimate, practical life of a child—of any child—in an idiom that is based on the daily speech of children. Mr. Brock, in his drawings, has caught this idiom with his own grace and invention. It may be added that when the poems were read to the seven-year-old daughter of another poet, she exclaimed, 'But that's all about me.' Hence the title of the book.

28



ROYALTY THEATRE

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 23rd, 1928

With the Compliments of
SIR BARRY JACKSON

on the occasion of the
250th performance

of

BIRD IN HAND

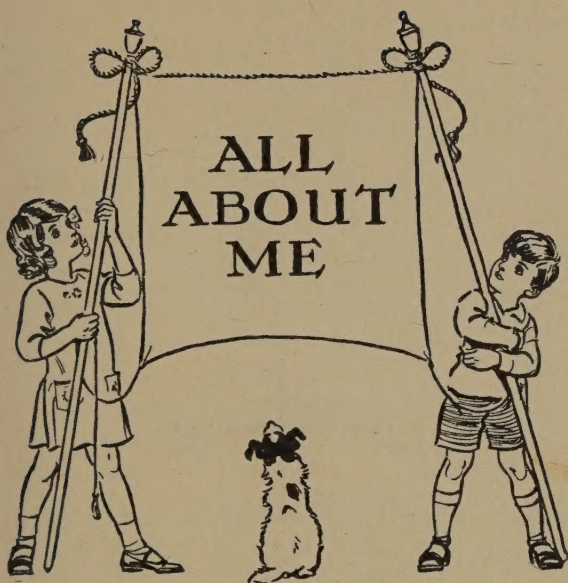
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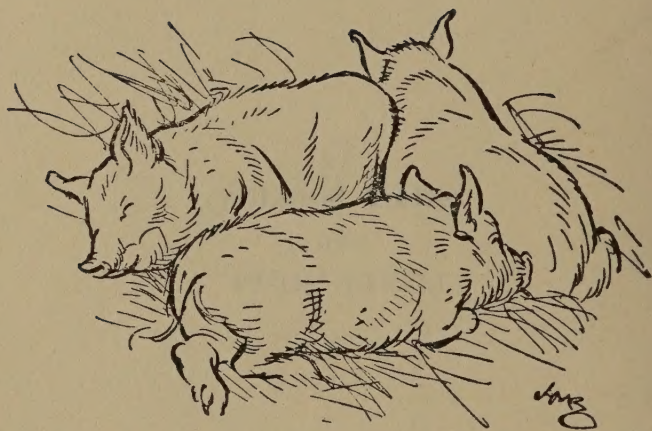
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To
SALLY SOPKINS
AND
LITTLE JOHN



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HOME & SCHOOL





LESSONS

I like to draw a pig or cat,
A house with windows, and all that,
But when it comes to drawing maps,
I think I'd rather not, perhaps.

From which remark you may have guessed
That jography is not my best,
Though one day I shall take a tram
From Golder's Green to Rotterdam.

Arithmetic is rather nice
For once times one or two times twice,
But when it comes to nine times nine
I'd rather it was yours than mine.

Not many people learn to spell
Better than me, or quite as well,
But letter S confuses me
If after a copostrophe.

The biggest books that I can read
Are sometimes pretty big indeed,
But pages without pictures there,
Are difficult and hardly fair.

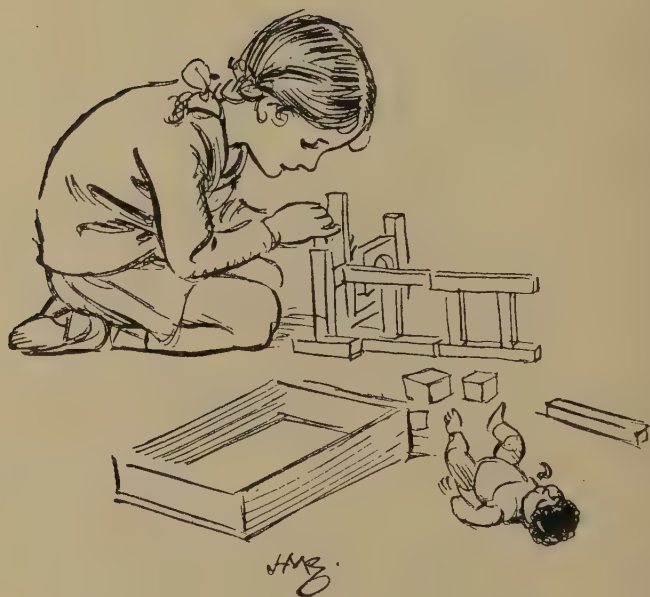


And when I've nothing else to do
I say *Je suis* and *Voulez-vous*,
But as I'm busy every day
I mostly talk another way.



So what with all these things in turn,
And scales and other things to learn,
And dancing on the music floor,
And one, and two, and three, and four,

And as I have a box of bricks,
And go to bed at half-past-six,
You'll see the time that I can call
My very own is very small.





FRIENDS

MONDAY

My very best friend is Barbara Day,
She's seven, and I am six,
She calls me Dear, and tells the way
To do arithmetics.

TUESDAY

I never am sure of seven times four,
So I asked it Barbara Day,
But she only said, with a shake of the head,
That she hadn't the time to-day.

WEDNESDAY

I find that Barbara isn't as nice
As I used to think she was,
I asked her why she was nasty, twice,
And she only said "Becos."



THURSDAY

She's not a girl that I want to know,
I think—but it all depends.
At least I have let her see me go
With several other friends.

FRIDAY

Barbara Day came up to me,
And said it was quite all right,
So I told the others they couldn't be
As much as I said they might.

SATURDAY

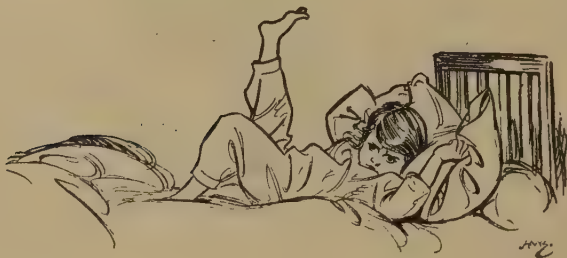
My *very* best friend is Barbara Day,
And she says that I'm her best ;
So I've hardly time, I'm sorry to say,
To bother about the rest.





PUNISHMENTS

It's nice to be naughty sometimes,
And when in the corner I stand,
They'll expect me in vain to cry or complain,
Or if I must hold out my hand ;
They may send me to bed, if they please,
A long time before it is time,
But still I'm afraid it's the way I am made—
It is nice to be naughty sometimes.





REWARDS

But I like to be good as a rule,
As then we get on very well,
And somehow I see that I'm much more like
me,
When there's nothing unpleasant to tell.
I'm much more important at home,
And much more important at school,
When it's quite understood I'm exceedingly
good,—
So I like to be good as a rule.



ENGLISH HISTORY

Elizabeth of England sat upon the throne
With nobody to share it. (That is to say, alone.)
Which, as we ascertain, was wholly contrary
To the practice that was followed by William
and Mary.

To James the First tobacco was a most obnoxious
weed,
But Edward the Seventh liked it very much
indeed.

Charles the First lost his head because of his
views.

While George the Second hadn't one to speak of
to lose.



George the Third was always writing letters to
Lord North,
And deploring the manners of his son, George
the Fourth.
Charles the Second spent a lot of time having
fun,
While his brother, James the Second, had little
or none.
Henry the Eighth wouldn't be the Pope's
minion,
But his daughter, Mary Tudor, didn't share his
opinion.
William the Fourth was a seafaring man,
But it's not known whether the sea suited Anne.



George the First liked Hanover as a child likes coral,
But Queen Victoria preferred Balmoral.
William the Conqueror made Barons by the score,
But King John found them a very great bore.
From ten-sixty-six to fifteen-nine,
There were several other members of the royal line.
Some died rich, and some in debt,
But what they did, at the moment I forget.



PRONUNCIATIONS

If I were not so very dull
I'd make a ballad on a bull.
And if I were not such a donkey,
A madrigal about a monkey.
And if my mind were not so slow
I'd sing a song about a sow ;
If I as you in wits were most rich
I'd try an ode upon an ostrich,
Or could I do it, which I can't,
An epic on an elephant ;



Or were I value for my money
A canzonet upon a cony,
Or rhyme the whole mammalian brood
That Noah rescued from the flood ;
But being half asleep I grieve
To say my brain-pan is a sieve.
Yet though I am a second-rater,
I am still your John Drinkwater.



GRACE

When I thank God for my nice food,
I'd like it to be understood
That I don't thank him just the same
For everything that I could name.



For instance, if it is boiled fish,
I do not think that he would wish
As many thanks as if he'd brought
A chicken with a merry-thought.



I hardly think "good dinner" means
Baked apples, tapioca, greens,
For, though I do not mention it,
They are my most unfavourite.

But when it is a bone to pick,
A batter pudding, or a stick
Of celery, I have agreed
To thank him very much indeed.



CLOCKS

I look at the clock, but what it says
I haven't the least idea.
It may be two, or it may be ten,
Or this time come next year.
Till half-past time, or at just o'clock,
It isn't so bad you see,
But the part where it says it's something to,
Means nothing at all to me.



And I'd like to know why the clock on the
church

Isn't the same at all

As the nursery clock, which isn't the same

As the clock that hangs in the hall?

And why is a quarter past eight the same

As twenty minutes to three?

These things, that possibly somebody knows,
Mean nothing at all to me.



I WANT TO KNOW——

I want to know why when I'm late
For school, they get into a state,
But if invited out to tea
I mustn't ever early be.



Why, if I'm eating nice and slow,
It's "Slow-coach, hurry up, you know!"
But if I'm eating nice and quick
It's "Gobble-gobble, you'll be sick!"

Why, when I'm walking in the street
My clothes must always be complete,
While at the seaside I can call
It right with nothing on at all.

Why I must always go to bed
When other people don't instead,
And why I have to say good-night
Always before I'm ready, quite.

Why seeds grow up instead of down,
Why sixpence isn't half a crown,
Why kittens are so quickly cats,
And why the angels have no hats.

It seems, however hard they try,
That nobody can tell me why,
So I know really, I suppose,
As much as anybody knows.



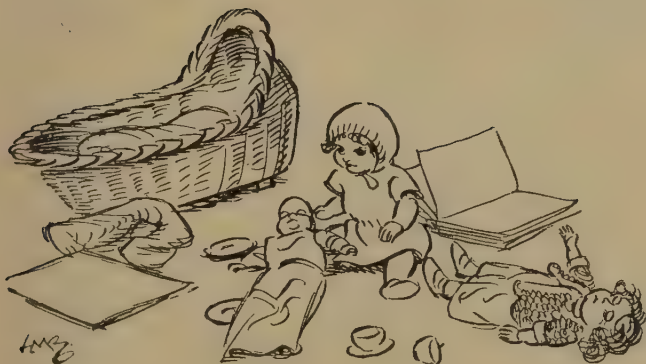


TIDYING UP

Of all the bothers there is none
So bad as this, that every day
Just after tea I start to play,
And then as soon as I've begun,
It's time to tidy up, oh dear,
 It's always time to tidy up,——
 "It's time to tidy up, my dear."

It takes no time at all, you know,
To get out all the things I need ;
But it takes very long indeed
To put them back again, and so
It's always time to tidy up,
 "It's time to tidy up, my dear ;"
 It's always time to tidy up.

And so I think we all must say,
Of all the bothers that there are,
The very botherest by far
Is that when we begin to play,
It's time to tidy up, oh dear,
It's always time to tidy up,
"It's time to tidy up, my dear."





WHAT I DISLIKE

Snip-snap-snorem,
When played with decorum,
Change for a penny,
Which seldom is any.
When it's decided
Who did it, that I did.
The absence of waiters
To button my gaiters.
When I'm not allowed to
Be read out aloud to.
Books I've not heard of,
And can't read a word of.
Writing a letter,
Till I do it better.
When what they have told me,
I don't, and they scold me.

But I don't think again of
The things I complain of.





WHAT I LIKE

Now I have told you more or less
Of all the things that I can call
Unpleasant, still I must confess
That they are nothing much at all.

And when I count up in my mind
How every morning seems to bring
Another happy day, I find
That I like almost everything.



BIOGRAPHIES





MR. SMITH AND MR. BROWN

Mr. Smith had quite a lot of daughters,
Who went to Bath each year, to take the waters.
Mr. Brown had quite a lot of sons,
Who also went to Bath, to take the buns.



ELIZA WATSON

Eliza Watson was a vulgar person,
This rhyme is bad, I've *seldom* seen a worse 'un.
She used to sing the hymns of Mr. Sankey,
And used her apron as a pocket-hankey.

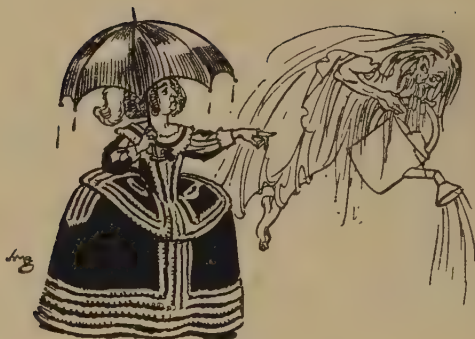




LOOFAH, THE BULL

Loofah, the Bull, had four-and-six,
To spend all on his own.
He didn't care for toffee-sticks,
Nor yet for buttered scone,
And so he bought a fishing-net
To keep his tail from getting wet.





MATILDA, QUEEN OF SPAIN

Matilda, who was Queen of Spain,
Decreed that no one should complain
If, when they sent her all their rain,
She had it all sent back again.





POTIPHAR JAMES

Potiphar James
Was good at games,
 But not very good at work,
He went to sea
For a bit of a spree,
 And sold himself to a Turk.
But the things that he viewed
Were uncommonly rude,
 And caused him so much pain,
That he grew refined,
And changed his mind,
 And bought himself back again.





PAMELA PONSONBY

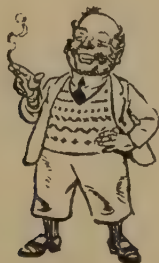
Pamela Ponsonby, when she was four,
Got herself into a lot of disgrace,
Pamela Ponsonby stamped on the floor,
And shouted "I won't," and went red in the
face.

But now she is seven she don't any more
Go screaming about with an awful grimace,
Because she has learnt what a terrible bore
It is if you get yourself into disgrace.



JOKING-APART AND LAUGH-AND-BE-GAY

Joking-Apart
Has a very good heart
Although sometimes he is sad ;
But Laugh-and-Be-Gay
Sometimes has a way
Of paying for less than he's had.





ALL-VERY-WELL AND YOURS-SINCERELY

All-Very-Well
Is a bit of a sell,
For he's not very well at all ;
While Yours-Sincerely
Is seldom really
A fellow on whom you'd call.





DR. McMACINTOSH

Dr. McMacintosh
Said he would never wash
 Until his beard grew green.
So his discontented
Wife invented
 The peas in the soup tureen.

And his beard by steeping,
As willow weeping,
 In vegetable dye,
Grew daily greener,
And now he is cleaner,
 Than you, or even I.





SIR IPECACUANHA SLY

Sir Ipecacuanha Sly
Was so conspicuously shy
That every one commended
His well-known modesty, that got
Reported in the Press a lot,
Which was what he intended.



LADY ANNIE HOW

Lady Annie How,
Morning, night, or noon,
Was never ready now,
But always ready soon.





JOHN PRIDE

No one liked John Pride,
Until he died,
When everybody said,
“Poor John’s dead,”
But he heard
Never a word.

And when he’d gone,
They found that John
Had often done
Good for fun;
Which only shows
That nobody knows.



PLAYTIME & PEOPLE





THE BIRD'S NEST

I know a place, in the ivy on a tree,
Where a bird's nest is, and the eggs are three,
And the bird is brown, and the eggs are blue,
And the twigs are old, but the moss is new,
And I go quite near, though I think I should
have heard
The sound of me watching, if I had been a
bird.





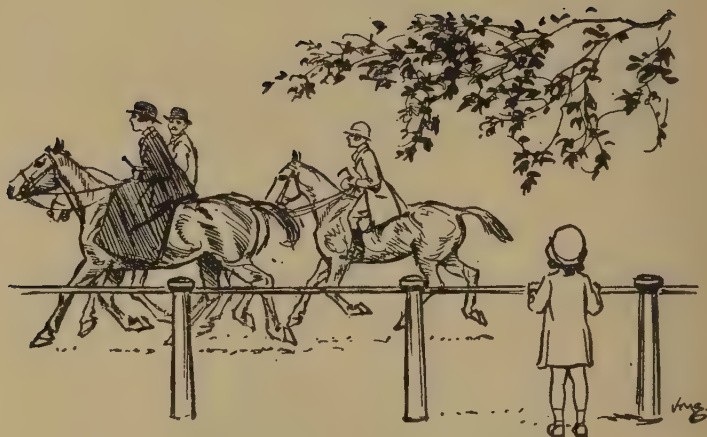
PIGS

They may sing of lambs and the fleet gazelles,
Of the steed, and the dappled deer,
Of mountain flocks with musical bells,
The bull and the milk-white steer,
But when of an English walk I go,
With a still discerning eye,
They none of them take my fancy so
As little pigs in a sty.



A little pig is a different thing
From one that's grown and big,
But a poet who declines to sing
The song of a little pig,
And gives himself to the gay gazelles,
The bull and the mountain roe,
Knows much less of his musical bells
Than he was meant to know.





RIDING IN ROTTEN ROW

I like to watch the ladies and the gentlemen who
go
A-riding round and round and round-about in
Rotten Row ;
And if I had a pony I suppose they wouldn't
mind
If I went riding with them, or a little way behind.

But I haven't any pony, so even if they said
That I might go a-riding, I should have to walk
instead;
But before I go to sleep sometimes I think things
in my mind,
And I seem to see me with them, or a little way
behind.





THE WAGON IN THE BARN

There are mushrooms in the paddock,
And walnuts on the trees,
And a hive in the corner
To keep the honey-bees ;
There's a hay-rick in the rick-yard,
And another one of wheat,
And there are cooking apples,
And other ones to eat.



There are berries on the bushes,
The yellow ones and red,
There are starlings in the willows,
And swallows in the shed ;
There's a scarecrow in the garden,
With a patch upon his starn,
But the thing that I like best is
The wagon in the barn.





For in the rainy weather,
 We all climb up inside,
And we have a team of horses
 To take us for a ride ;
And although they think we're playing
 In the barn because it rains,
We go riding in the wagon
 For miles along the lanes.



EXCHANGING

The silver paper that I find,
I like to press into a book,
And then whenever I've a mind
I open it and have a look ;
The patterned bits are rather few,
And some are big and some are small,
And others that are gold or blue
Are hardly silver bits at all.

When other children that I know
Have pieces to exchange, I may ;
But I am rather proud, and so
I only give the best away ;
Some people say that they would keep
The best themselves, and give the rest,
But somehow I am not so deep,
And so I give away the best.





WALKS

Although it is hard to defend
Saying something that's not in your
mind,
There are things that we *have* to pretend,
Because to displease is unkind.
For example, sometimes when I'm told
It is time to go out for a walk,
I'm not so much gooder than gold
As you'd think from the way that I
talk.



It is all very well to go out
If there aren't any clouds overhead,
Or when there are snowballs about,
Or ducks in the park to be fed.
But when it is muddy and wet,
And I'm told I must have some fresh
air,
I hate to go walking, and yet
I pretend not to very much care.

And I do it for Mummy, for she
Believes it will certainly make
Me ever so strong, so you see
I have to pretend for her sake ;
But in secret I'd rather stay in
And play with the games that I've got,
So if the rain has to begin
I privately hope for a lot.





GAMES¹

These are the games that I recommend,
Whenever you want to play
With many, or just a single friend
In a friendly kind of way,—
Ludo, Beggar-My-Neighbour, Hap-
Py Families, Two in the Shade,
Ace in the Middle, Donkey, Snap,
Tiddlywinks, Old Maid.



Dominoes, Halma, Draughts, Red Nines,
And also My Bird Sings,
Snakes and Ladders, Between the Lines,
Are all of them very good things,
And any of these give a popular tone
To a party anywhere,
While Patience pleases All Alone,
Or even Solitaire.

¹ The Author is sorry to confess that he has cheated about two of the names, if anybody can find him out.

PUZZLES

Two days ago the wild-rose buds
Were very tight and small ;
The roses yesterday were wide,
And now to-day they fall.
And yet I see
That other buds are on the tree.



The mud walls of the thrushes' nest
Were wet a month ago,
Five speckled eggs were laid, and now
I watch the feathers grow
On five new thrushes, while a new
Nest near has other eggs of blue.



The river waters flowing by
Come back again no more,
And yet the flowing waters fill
The river as before,
For they are meant
In spending never to be spent.

It all seems very strange to me,
Perhaps it does to you ;
All things, it seems, must go, and yet
All things are always new,
Which somehow seems to show that
there
Is some one who is taking care.





THE SUN

I told the Sun that I was glad,
I'm sure I don't know why ;
Somehow the pleasant way he had
Of shining in the sky,
Just put a notion in my head
That wouldn't it be fun
If, walking on the hill, I said
" I'm happy " to the Sun.

Bright Sun, although you cannot hear,
And though you may not care,—
Because you make the day so clear
For all the fields to wear,
I'll come again upon the hill,
And sing to you aloud
A song of happy me, until
You go into your cloud.





THE DIFFERENCE

Big Ben strikes
Not when he likes,
 But when he is told to ;
A pair of shoes
Never can choose
 Who to be sold to ;

The apples inside
May never decide
Which pie they will go in,
Nor the lilies and roses
And other posies,
Which garden to grown in.





Yet I and you
Mostly can do
 The things that we mean to,
And rely, when we say
What our needs are to-day,
 On having them seen to.



INVITATIONS

I asked the King to come to tea,
But when my invitation
Was taken to the Palace, he
Was busy with the Nation.

So then I thought I'd ask the Queen,
And wrote another letter,
But she had got a Crown to clean,
Which wasn't any better.



And then I asked the Prince of Wales,
Who answered to his sorrow
That, whether it was heads or tails,
He couldn't come to-morrow.

And then the Duke of York I tried,
And all the other Princes,
But hardly one of them replied,
Which certainly convinces

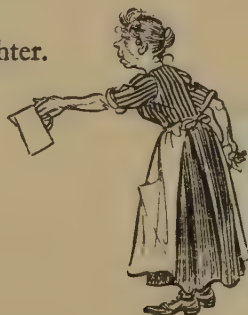
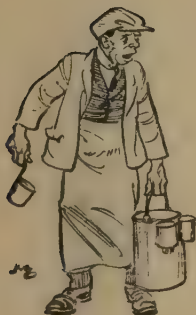
Myself, and now at last I see
That there is no intention
Among the Royal Family
To do the thing I mention.

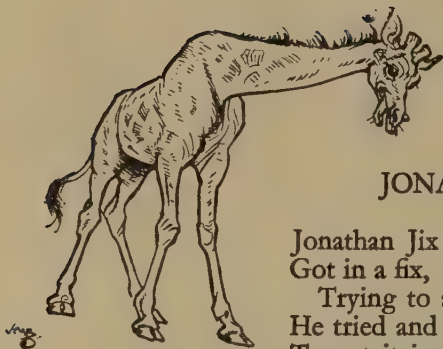




ERMYNTRUDE

Ermyntrude
Was very rude
To all her friends and neighbours,
And much annoyed
The unemployed
With psalteries and tabors ;
She snubbed the gent
Who called for rent,
And asked him for a bonus,
And when she stole
The barber's pole
She said it was *his* onus ;
She told
The milkman that he sold
A lot less milk than water,
And so
In her Eve came to know
A most unpleasant daughter.





JONATHAN JIX

Jonathan Jix
 Got in a fix,
 Trying to swallow a brandy ball ;
 He tried and he tried
 To get it inside,
 But couldn't get on at all, at all ;
 For he suddenly saw
 A green macaw
 Pecking a judge in Chancery Lane,
 And a pale giraffe
 With a curious laugh
 Startled the lollipop up again ;
 Then a kangaroo,
 Who had left the Zoo,
 Went lightly lolloping
 down the Strand,
 With a marmoset
 In a bit of a pet
 Because he had lost a German Band.





When Jonathan Jix
Saw all the tricks
Of these and many a varmint more,
He became so very
And oddly merry
That he laughed until
his ribs were sore.
And the benefit
That he got from it
In the matter of health
was by no means small,
But I understand,
On the other hand,
That he *never* got rid of
the brandy ball.



THE CASTLE ON THE SAND

I take my bucket and my spade,
And build a castle on the sand,
And nobody has ever made
A better castle in the land.
And when I've built it in my play,
The sea can wash it all away.



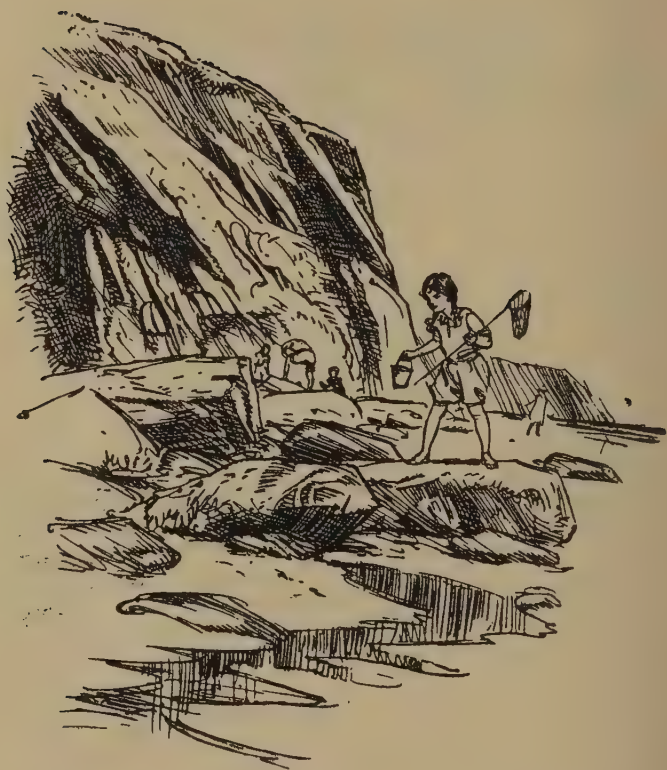
It is a castle with a moat,
It has a river to the sea,
And on the river is a boat,
Not big, but big enough for me.
Because I easily pretend
That I am in it with a friend.

My castle hasn't any King,
It hasn't any bedroom bells,
But in the garden is a ring
Of many-shaped and coloured shells
Which are the best of several more
That I have found along the shore.



It is "To Let. Enquire Within,"
Though nobody will answer you,
As nobody is ever in.
But as in half an hour or two
The sea will wash it all away,
There isn't any rent to pay.





THE ROCKS

Among the rocks are many pools
Where any one can sail a ship
And when you once have learnt the
rules

It's pretty easy not to slip;
The rules of where a heel should
go,
Upon a rock, and where a toe.

But you will find if toe or heel
Goes on another place instead
That howsoever rocks may feel,
It isn't like a feather-bed,
And seaweed that goes pop you'll
find
Is much the most deceitful kind.



For sitting down, as I have done,
In places where you don't intend,
Is not what I consider fun,
But otherwise I recommend
A walk among the rocks and
pools,
As long as you obey the rules.





BIG WHALE

Big Whale lives out in the sea there ;
I've seen him spouting, so I know he must be
there ;

Dark under water the bulk of him goes,
And he blows great fountains out of his nose ;
He dives, he wanders, he dozes in the deep,
He glooms under keels, Leviathan asleep,
Big Whale dreaming of a day, may be,
Laden with Jonah in the caverns of the sea.





THE WAVE

Who says I'm not brave?
I let a wave
Taller than two or three
People like me,
Come rolling, rolling, rolling out of the sea,
With bunches of spray,
In a most tremendous way,
All over me.

And I didn't run. I stood
Very still,
Until
It was right up above me, and
I was inside,
And I never cried;
Which I think was rather good
And grand,
Though somebody was hold-
ing my hand
All the time inside the wave.
I *do* think it was brave.





MR. MOON

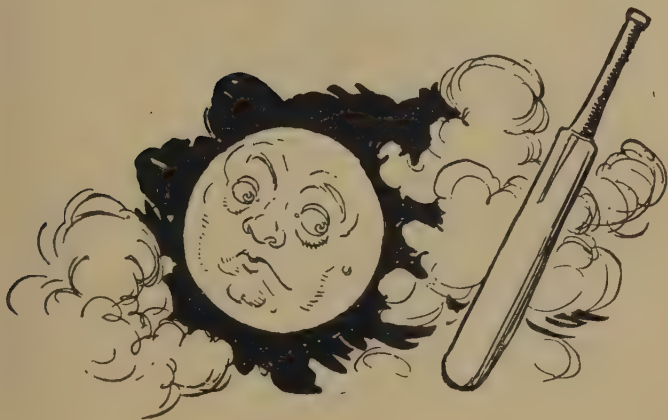
O Mr. Moon, how far away
Are you to-night?
And why are you not still alight
By day,
Dear Mr. Moon?
Now tell me, pray?

Why is it I can look at you,
But not the sun?
And must my wish be only one?
Or two?—

Dear Mr. Moon,
When you are new?

They tell me that you are not flat,
But like a ball.
Then have you met a thing they
call

A bat,
Dear Mr. Moon?
Pray tell me that?



And what is on the other side
Of what I see?
Could you just whisper it to me,
If I'd,
Dear Mr. Moon,
My window wide?

When you are just a quarter
where
Is all the rest?
And which star do you like the
best
Up there,
Dear Mr. Moon?
Or don't you care?

What is it keeps you in the sky,
So safe and still?
Why don't you ever tumble? Will
You try,
Dear Mr. Moon,
To tell me why?

Or if you think it ought to be
A little note,
I'd like to say the Moon had
wrote
To me,
Dear Mr. Moon;
So I agree.





IF I WERE —



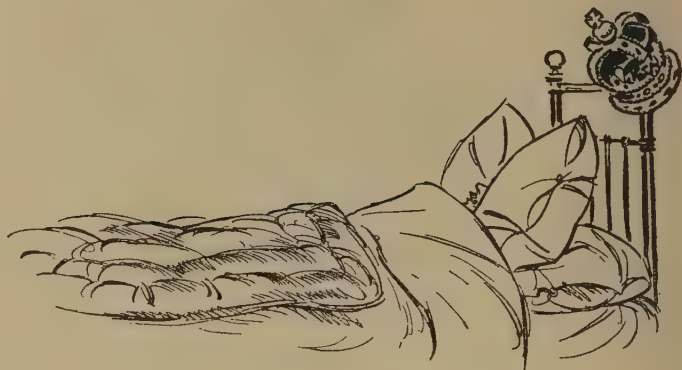


YOU

When people say "If I were You,"
And tell me what I ought to do,
I often wonder what they'd say
If it turned out that I was They.

KING

If I were King, I'd always keep
The crown upon my royal head ;
But if I had to go to sleep,
Perhaps I'd take it off instead.





DOCTOR

If I were Doctor, I would make
Medicines that I should like to take ;
And sometimes stay at home, and write
A note to school to say I might.



POSTMAN

If I were Postman, when I went
Along our street, I'd always be
Careful that somebody had sent
A letter in my bag for me.



P'LICEMAN

If I were P'liceman, when I saw
A person who had broke the law,
I'd ask him if he understood
That it was easy to be good.



HAMMOND AND OTHERS

If I were Hammond, Hobbs, or Hirst,
Or C. B. Fry, or any one,
Then every day I'd go in first,
And make a hundred just for fun.

ROVER

If I were Rover, there are quite
A lot of people I should bite—
Yet, though I'm sure it should be done,
I can't remember even one.



COOK

If I were Cook, I'd always do
Dumplings and almond macaroons,
Some pancakes, a mince-pie or two,
But never, never, never prunes.





TEACHER

If I were Teacher, I should set
Only the things that I can do,
Because in that way I could get
Full marks each time because I knew.



NURSE

If I were Nurse, I should forget
Sometimes that it was bedtime yet ;
And also I should never tell
About the things I don't do well.

MUMMY

If I were Mummy, you'll agree
I couldn't any better grow—
If I were Mummy, I should be
The nicest person that I know.



ANY ONE BUT ME

If I were any one but Me,
Of course I know that it might be
Not quite so nice, and rather strange,
And so I think I will not change.





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